

What is mind? No matter. What is matter? Never mind.
George Berkeley

51 MENTAL FACTORS

In the *Abhidharmakosha* of Vasubandhu, 51 types of mind states or mental factors are distinguished. They are mainly categorised by the way they are related to the main delusions of attachment, anger and ignorance, (see below) and their relevance to mind training. Note that the English terms used often have different connotations than the actual definitions in Buddhism. Although below list may appear a dull list of definitions, a careful study of it can explain much of the Buddhist attitude towards the mind.

The list does not have the intention to be complete in describing all possible mental states, but describes merely the most important ones in relation to spiritual practice.

THE 5 OMNIPRESENT (EVER-RECURRING) MENTAL FACTORS

1. **Feeling** (the first aggregate)
2. **Recognition** / discrimination / distinguishing awareness (the second aggregate)
3. **Intention** / mental impulse - I will ...
4. **Concentration** / attention / mental application - focused grasping of an object of awareness
5. **Contact** - the connection of an object with the mind, this may be pleasurable, painful or neutral as experienced by the aggregate of Feeling.

THE 5 DETERMINATIVE MENTAL FACTORS

6. **Resolution** / aspiration - directing effort to fulfill desired intention, basis for diligence and enthusiasm.
7. **Interest** / appreciation - holding on to a particular thing, not allowing distraction
8. **Mindfulness** / Recollection - repeatedly bringing objects back to mind, not forgetting
9. **Concentration** / *Samadhi* - one-pointed focus on an object, basis for increasing intelligence
10. **Intelligence** / Wisdom - "common-sense intelligence", fine discrimination, examines characteristics of objects, stops doubt, maintains root of all wholesome qualities.

THE 4 VARIABLE (POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE) MENTAL FACTORS

11. **Sleep** - makes mind unclear, sense consciousness turns inwards
12. **Regret** - makes mind unhappy when regarding a previously done action as bad, prevents the mind from being at ease.
13. **General examination** / coarse discernment - depending on intelligence or intention, searches for rough idea about the object.
14. **Precise analysis** / subtle discernment - depending on intelligence or intention, examines the object in detail.

THE 11 VIRTUOUS MENTAL FACTORS

(Note that 18 and 19 are not necessary always virtuous. The first 3 are also known as *roots of virtue*.)

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15. **Faith** / confidence / respectful belief - gives us positive attitude to virtue and objects that are worthy of respect. Three types are distinguished, with the last one being the preferred type:

- a. uncritical faith: motivation is for no apparent reason
- b. longing faith: motivation is by an emotionally unstable mind
- c. conviction: motivated by sound reasons

16. **Sense of Propriety** / self-respect - usually the personal conscience to stop negative actions and perform positive actions

17. **Considerateness** / decency - avoids evil towards others, basis for unspoiled moral discipline.

18. **Suppleness** / thorough training / flexibility - enables the mind to engage in positive acts as wished, interrupting mental or physical rigidity.

19. **Equanimity** / clear-minded tranquility - peaceful mind, not being overpowered by delusions, no mental dullness or agitation

20. **Conscientiousness** / carefulness - causes avoiding negative acts & doing good; mind with detachment, non-hatred, non-ignorance and enthusiasm

21. **Renunciation** / detachment - no attachment to cyclic existence and objects

22. **Non hatred** / imperturbability - no animosity to others or conditions; rejoicing

23. **Non-bewilderment** / non ignorance / open-mindedness - usually understanding the meaning of things through clear discrimination, never unwilling to learn

24. **Non violence** / complete harmlessness - compassion without any hatred, pacifist

25. **Enthusiasm** / diligence - doing positive acts (specifically mental development and meditation) with delight

THE 6 NON-VIRTUOUS MENTAL FACTORS

THE 6 ROOT DELUSIONS (Delusion is defined as any secondary mental factor that, when developed, brings about suffering and uneasiness to self or others.)

26. **Ignorance** - not knowing karma, meaning and practice of 3 Jewels, includes closed-mindedness, lack of *wisdom of emptiness*.

27. **Attachment** / desire - definition: not wanting to be separated from someone or something. Grasping at aggregates in cyclic existence causes rebirth & suffering of existence

28. **Anger** - definition: wanting to be separated from someone or something, can lead to relentless desire to hurt others; causes unhappiness

29. **Pride** - inflated superiority, supported by one's worldly views, which include disrespect of others

30. **Doubt** / deluded indecisive wavering - being in two minds about reality; usually leads to negative actions

31. **Wrong views** / speculative delusions - based on emotional afflictions. Distinguished in 5 types: belief in the self as permanent or non-existent (as opposite to the view of emptiness); denying karma, not understanding the value of the 3 Jewels; closed-mindedness (my view -which is wrong- is best); wrong conduct (not towards liberation)

THE 20 SECONDARY NON-VIRTUOUS MENTAL FACTORS

Derived from anger:

32. **Wrath** / hatred - by increased anger, malicious state wishing to cause immediate harm to others

33. **Vengeance** / malice / resentment - not forgetting harm done by a person, and seeking to return harm done to oneself

34. **Rage** / spite / outrage - intention to utter harsh speech in reply to unpleasant words, when wrath

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and malice become unbearable

35. **Cruelty** / vindictiveness / mercilessness - being devoid of compassion or kindness, seeking harm to others.

Derived from anger and attachment:

36. **Envy** / jealousy - internal anger caused by attachment; unbearable to bear good things others have

Derived from attachment:

37. **Greed** / avarice / miserliness - intense clinging to possessions and their increase

38. **Vanity** / self-satisfaction - seeing one's good fortune giving one a false sense of confidence; being intoxicated with oneself

39. **Excitement** / wildness / mental agitation - distraction towards desire objects, not allowing the mind to rest on something wholesome; obstructs single pointed concentration.

Derived from ignorance:

40. **Concealment** - hiding one's negative qualities when others with good intention refer to them this causes regret

41. **Dullness** / muddle-headedness - caused by fogginess which makes mind dark/heavy - like when going to sleep, coarse dullness is when the object is unclear, subtle dullness is when the object has no intense clarity

42. **Faithlessness** - no belief of that which is worthy of respect; it can be the idea that virtue is unnecessary, or a mistaken view of virtue; it forms the basis for laziness (43)

43. **Laziness** - being attached to temporary pleasure, not wanting to do virtue or only little; opposite to diligence [25])

44. **Forgetfulness** - causes to not clearly remember virtuous acts, inducing distraction to disturbing objects - not "just forgetting", but negative tendency

45. **Inattentiveness** / lack of conscience - "distracted wisdom" after rough or no analysis, not fully aware of one's conduct, careless indifference and moral failings; intentional seeking mental distraction like daydreaming

Derived from attachment and ignorance:

46. **Hypocrisy** / pretension - pretend non-existent qualities of oneself

47. **Dishonesty** / smugness - hiding one's faults, giving no clear answers, no regret, snobbery & conceit, self-importance and finding faults with others

Derived from attachment, anger and ignorance

48. **Shamelessness** - consciously not avoiding evil, it supports all root and secondary delusions

49. **Inconsiderateness** - not avoiding evil, being inconsiderate of other's practice, ingratitude

50. **Unconscientiousness** / carelessness- 3 delusions plus laziness; wanting to act unrestrained

51. **Distraction** / mental wandering - inability to focus on any virtuous object